

The Alaskan Way Viaduct & Seawall Replacement Project

06.06



May 2006 Public Meetings – What We Heard

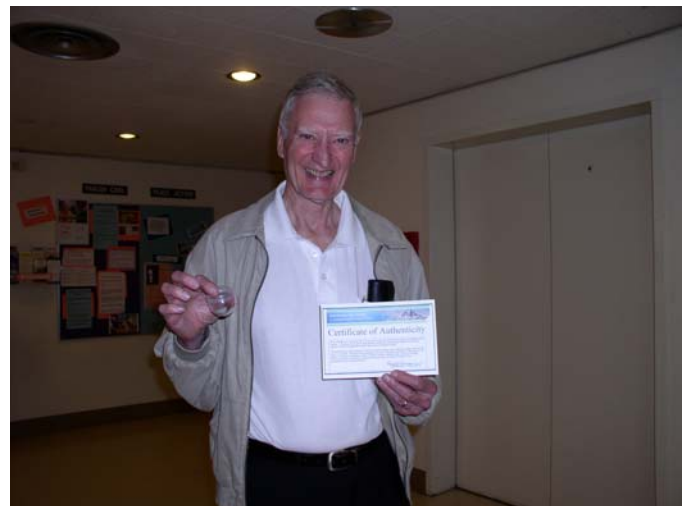
The Alaskan Way Viaduct and Seawall Replacement Project hosted three public meetings on May 22, May 23, and May 24, 2006. The purpose of the open houses was to communicate the facts about the tunnel and elevated structure and to introduce options for constructing the alternatives. Stations of display boards were set up around the room; station topics included general project information, alternatives considered but screened out, alignments of the tunnel and elevated structure, costs, and construction plans.

Meeting Format

Open house participants had the choice of viewing the boards on their own or taking a guided tour with a project team member. About one-third to one-half of each night's attendees took advantage of the option to take the tour. In addition, other project staff were stationed around the room according to their area of expertise. These team members were available to talk one-on-one with the public and to answer their questions. Several team members wore "Ask me about _____" nametags so that attendees could quickly identify the best person to answer their question.

Every open house attendee was provided with a comment form and the most recent project folio, comparing the tunnel and elevated structure alternatives. They also received an

open house quiz that could be completed for a prize. Answers to the quiz were located on the display boards around the room, and the prize was a piece of the viaduct. Several pieces of the viaduct were given away each night. Translated folios and fact sheets related to safety, capacity, and recent legislative developments were also available, as was a black-and-white handout of the display boards.



An attendee at the downtown open house shows off a piece of the viaduct, complete with certificate of authenticity. He won the prize by completing a quiz of viaduct facts.

Handouts and display boards were also available from other projects in the corridor. The station of other projects included information from the Corps of Engineers' Seawall Feasibility Study, the Seattle Ferry Terminal Project at Colman Dock, the Central Waterfront Plan, and the Spokane Street Widening Project.

The three open houses were held throughout the project corridor, in neighborhoods that will be directly affected by construction. The meetings were held at the Plymouth Congregational Church in downtown Seattle, Cooper Elementary School in West Seattle, and the Ballard Community Center in Ballard. Each meeting lasted about two hours. Over 200 people attended the three meetings; approximately 60 people attended the downtown meeting, 75 attended the West Seattle meeting, and 80 attended in Ballard.

Comments received at all three meetings are detailed below in the overall comment summary. A detailed description of comments from each meeting follows it.

Summary of Comments

The following is a summary of comments received at all three public meetings. A total of 117 comment forms were received. There is statistical data for some categories, as well as a summary of the answers given for other questions. This section also describes the methods that were used to quantify comments.

1. How often do you use the viaduct?

44%--Weekly
31%--Daily
13%--Monthly
9%--Seldom
2%--Between daily and weekly
1%--No answer

Few attendees at the downtown meeting indicated that they use the viaduct on a daily basis. Rather, a majority of attendees at the downtown meeting indicated weekly, monthly, or rare use of the viaduct. Attendees at the West Seattle and Ballard meetings mostly responded that they use the viaduct on a daily or weekly basis.

2. When do you use the viaduct most often?

29%--Off-peak hours during the day
27%--Peak/commute hours
22%--More than one answer
13%--Weekends
5%--No answer
4%--Off-peak hours during the night



A tour group views display boards.

Attendees at the West Seattle and Ballard open houses were decidedly more likely to use the viaduct during peak hours. By contrast, most downtown respondents said they used the viaduct during off-peak hours during the day. Additionally, most respondents who selected more than one answer indicated some use of the viaduct during daytime off-peak hours.

3. Do you use the viaduct to:

- 54%--Both bypass downtown and go to downtown
- 32%--Bypass downtown
- 11%--Go to downtown
- 3%--No answer

Most respondents use the viaduct to both bypass downtown and go to downtown. A higher percentage of downtown and Ballard attendees indicated using the viaduct to bypass downtown than West Seattle respondents. West Seattle had the highest percentage of people using the viaduct to go to downtown.

4. When you use the viaduct, do you most frequently:

- 48%--Drive your car by yourself
- 30%--Drive your car with a passenger(s)
- 12%--More than one answer
- 5%--Take the bus
- 2%--Be a passenger in a car
- 2%--No answer
- 1%--Drive a freight truck or delivery vehicle

Results at each meeting generally reflect these percentages. The exception is bus usage, where only West Seattle attendees responded that they take the bus when using the viaduct. The majority of those who selected more than one answer indicated that they sometimes drove their car alone.

5. Do you (you may select multiple options):

- 39%--Live north of downtown
- 32%--Live south of downtown
- 25%--Work south of downtown
- 19%--Work downtown
- 10%--Work north of downtown
- 10%--Other
- 9%--Live downtown

Note: These numbers are independent of each other, meaning that people were given the option of selecting more than one box. Each percentage is calculated as the number of times each box was checked over the total number of comment forms.

Not surprisingly, the trends shown above differ from the percentages from each individual meeting. People generally attended a meeting in or near their own neighborhood. Downtown attendees mainly indicated working downtown and living in downtown or north of downtown, Ballard attendees mainly indicated living north of downtown, and West Seattle attendees mainly indicated living south of downtown.

6a. For your most frequent trips on the viaduct, where are you coming from and going to? Select one in each category.

ORIGIN

- 33%--West Seattle
- 18%--Ballard
- 11%--Magnolia
- 10%--Downtown
- 10%--Queen Anne
- 7%--Other
- 6%--Greenwood
- 3%--Duwamish
- 3%--SeaTac
- 2%--Shoreline
- 1%--Interbay

DESTINATION

- 32%--Downtown
- 18%--Other
- 15%--West Seattle
- 13%--Ballard
- 13%--SeaTac
- 9%--SODO
- 7%--Duwamish
- 7%--Queen Anne
- 6%--Fremont
- 3%--Magnolia
- 2%--Greenwood
- 2%--Shoreline

1%--Federal Way
 1%--Interbay
 1%--South Lake Union

8%--Longer construction plan: higher cost, longest overall duration, less intense but longer traffic impacts
 4%--No construction

Note: Although respondents were asked to pick one location in each category, all checked boxes were counted as either an origin or a destination, so these percentages are independent of each other.

Common replies for “other destinations” include the University of Washington and connections to I-5 and I-90. The meeting location tended to predict the respondent’s origin point; many downtown attendees indicated starting in downtown or just north of downtown in Queen Anne. Destination points varied slightly between the meetings: downtown respondents most often use the viaduct to go to SeaTac and West Seattle, West Seattle respondents were most often headed to downtown and Ballard, and Ballard respondents most frequently cited trips to downtown, West Seattle, and the SODO area.

6b. Are there other frequent trips you make on the viaduct?

The most common responses from all three meetings indicated trips to the University of Washington, the airport, downtown, the stadiums, and as a connection to I-90 and I-5.

7. After reviewing the information presented on construction, which construction plan do you prefer? Comments?

38%--Shorter construction plan: lower cost, shortest overall duration, intense traffic impacts
 30%--Intermediate construction plan: intermediate cost and overall duration, periods of intense and less intense traffic impacts.
 20%--No answer

“No construction” was put forth by several West Seattle attendees, who argued that construction could be avoided altogether with the selection of a retrofit or no replacement alternative. Downtown attendees showed a clear preference for the shorter plan, while Ballard and West Seattle attendees were fairly split between the shorter and intermediate plans. West Seattle had the greatest percentage of respondents favoring the intermediate plan. See the individual meeting summaries below for representative comments.

8. Considering your priorities, what ideas should be considered as ways to keep the most people and goods moving during construction?

Most respondents provided ideas about transit. Attendees felt that transit should be prioritized and increased, and they felt that incentives should be offered to those who take transit. Many also felt surface streets should be used for dedicated transit and freight routes, and that parking should be taken off of the streets to allow for more lanes. Other ideas included improved signage and traffic signal timing during construction, mandatory carpooling, and improvements for pedestrians. More specific ideas from each meeting are presented below.

9. Was there information presented tonight about the tunnel or elevated structure alternatives that was useful? What was not here that you would like to know more about?

Many attendees wrote that they found the information on the alternatives useful. Some attendees saw a bias in the information that was presented on the alternatives: some

claimed that the information was biased in favor of the tunnel, while others wondered why there was little or no information presented on the retrofit and no-replacement options. More information was also requested on the economic benefits of the tunnel, costs, and safety.

10. Was there information presented tonight about construction that was useful? What was not here that you would like to know more about?

This question was answered in a similar fashion to #9; while many respondents found the information useful, others were frustrated that they were only seeing information on the tunnel and elevated structure. Respondents would like to know more about the construction timeline and how construction will specifically impact them.

11. How did you hear about tonight's open houses?

- 26%--Postcard
- 22%--Newspaper ad
- 22%--Print news
- 20%--Project email list
- 18%--Other
- 8%--Community Calendar
- 2%--Television news

Note: These numbers are independent of each other, meaning that people were given the option of selecting more than one box. Each percentage is calculated as the number of times each box was checked over the total number of comment forms.

12. Any other comments?

Several commenters noted that they were not asked which alternative they prefer. Many respondents used this space to voice support for the retrofit and no-replacement option. The tunnel, the elevated structure, and the Elliott

Bay Bridge also received support or criticism in this question, and representative comments of these opinions can be found in the individual meeting summaries below. Several people expressed frustration with local politics. Other respondents were concerned with the issue of funding and asked that they not be further taxed.



Attendees complete comment forms.

May 22, 2006—Plymouth Congregational Church (Downtown Seattle)—5:00-7:00 p.m.

Thirty comment forms were received at the downtown open house. Quotes in this section were chosen as representative comments for the type of feedback received. Not every comment is listed here.

1. How often do you use the viaduct?

40%--Weekly
27%--Monthly
20%--Seldom
10%--Daily
3%--No answer

2. When do you use the viaduct most often?

37%--Off-peak hours during the day
27%--More than one answer
13%--Weekends
13%--No answer
7%--Peak/commute hours
3%--Off-peak hours at night

Most respondents who selected more than one answer showed a combination of weekend and off-peak usage.

3. Do you use the viaduct to:

43%--Bypass downtown
33%--Both bypass downtown and go to downtown
13%--Go to downtown
10%--No answer

4. When you use the viaduct, do you most frequently:

50%--Drive your car by yourself
30%--Drive your car with a passenger(s)
10%--No answer
7%--More than one answer
3%--Be a passenger in a car

5. Do you (you may select multiple options):

37%--Work downtown
37%--Live north of downtown
30%--Live downtown
10%--Other
7%--Work south of downtown
3%--Work north of downtown
3%--Live south of downtown

6a. For your most frequent trips on the viaduct, where are you coming from and going to? Select one in each category.

ORIGIN

30%--Downtown
23%--Queen Anne
13%--Other
10%--Magnolia
7%--Ballard
7%--Duwamish
7%--Greenwood
7%--SeaTac
3%--West Seattle

DESTINATION

27%--SeaTac
20%--West Seattle
17%--Downtown
10%--Ballard
10%--Queen Anne
7%--Duwamish
7%--Fremont
7%--Other
3%--Magnolia
3%--SODO

6b. Are there other frequent trips you make on the viaduct?

Downtown respondents most frequently indicated trips to the airport and using the viaduct as a connection to I-90 and I-5, if they did not indicate those trips in Question 6a.

7. After reviewing the information presented on construction, which construction plan do you prefer? Comments?

50%--Shorter construction plan: lower cost, shortest overall duration, intense traffic impacts

30%--No answer

13%--Intermediate construction plan: intermediate cost and overall duration, periods of intense and less intense traffic impacts.

7%--Longer construction plan: higher cost, longest overall duration, less intense but longer traffic impacts

Comments:

Prefers shorter plan: "Bite the bullet."

Prefers intermediate plan: "From tonight's information, the cost and time penalties of the intermediate option seem to find the best balance."

Prefers longer plan: "For the savings involved (15-20%) it does not seem worthwhile to radically alter traffic patterns for 3+ years. This is a statement against interest since I personally would benefit most from the shortest possible construction time."

8. Considering your priorities, what ideas should be considered as ways to keep the most people and goods moving during construction?

- Better timed lights on major north-south routes through town.
- Build pedestrian/bike bridge to waterfront.
- Build a new parking garage(s) owned by the city and metered to eliminate street parking in town. This would help with the loss of parking under the viaduct. We need to maintain city-owned parking.

- Bus shuttles to and from remote lots north and south of town.
- Increase "free fare" area on buses just beyond the downtown core. Adding bus-only lanes to existing north-south roads.
- Dedicated freight routes.

9. Was there information presented tonight about the tunnel or elevated structure alternatives that was useful? What was not here that you would like to know more about?

"I would like to know how downtown gets connected to the waterfront."

"Economic impact, not just project cost for different construction schedules."

"I would like the city to look at this issue in conjunction with mass transit rather than treating them as totally different questions."

"Transit times on the options. How long will it take to drive completely through Seattle from both directions on either alternative."

10. Was there information presented tonight about construction that was useful? What was not here that you would like to know more about?

"Which plan, tunnel or viaduct, has more risk of cost overruns? Do you care, since you will just add more tax burden to us?"

11. How did you hear about tonight's open houses?

30%--Project email list
20%--Other
17%--Newspaper ad
17%--Postcard
13%--Print news

Responses for 'Other' included friends and online methods, such as the WSDOT and City's websites.

12. Any other comments?

"Middle class voter being taxed to lower class. No new taxes or increased utility bills. Leave some money in our pocket."

"I rarely drive the viaduct, but I'm a frequent pedestrian/bicyclist in the area. All this information speaks to cars, cars, cars. What are we doing to encourage non-car transportation alternatives? Which option is best for public transportation, bicyclists, and pedestrians?"

"It's not clear how the final decisions on which of these options to go with will be made."

May 23, 2006—Cooper Elementary School (West Seattle)—5:00-7:00 p.m.

A total of 44 comment forms were received at this open house. Quotes in this section were chosen as representative comments for the type of feedback received. Not every comment is listed here.

1. How often do you use the viaduct?

41%--Daily
39%--Weekly
11%--Seldom
5%--Between daily and weekly
4%--Monthly

2. When do you use the viaduct most often?

34%--Peak/commute hours
34%--Off-peak hours during the day
16%--More than one answer
11%--Weekends
5%--Off-peak hours at night

Attendees who checked more than one answer for this question selected a combination of peak and off-peak usage.

3. Do you use the viaduct to:

68%--Both bypass downtown and go to downtown
16%--Bypass downtown
16%--Go to downtown

4. When you use the viaduct, do you most frequently:

45%--Drive your car by yourself
30%--Drive your car with a passenger(s)
14%--Take the bus
9%--More than one answer
2%--Drive a freight truck or delivery vehicle



Attendees view display boards and materials at the downtown open house.

5. Do you (you may select multiple options):

81%--Live south of downtown
 14%--Work downtown
 14%--Work south of downtown
 11%--Work north of downtown
 11%--Other

Other responses included working at the University of Washington and working on the Eastside.

6a. For your most frequent trips on the viaduct, where are you coming from and going to? Select one in each category.**ORIGIN**

84%--West Seattle
 7%--Other
 5%--Downtown
 5%--Duwamish
 2%--Ballard
 2%--Fremont
 2%--Magnolia
 2%--Queen Anne

DESTINATION

55%--Downtown
 23%--Ballard
 18%--Other
 11%--Fremont
 9%--Queen Anne
 5%--Magnolia
 5%--West Seattle
 2%--Greenwood
 2%--Interbay
 2%--Shoreline
 2%--SODO
 2%--South Lake Union

6b. Are there other frequent trips you make on the viaduct?

West Seattle attendees most frequently indicated trips to Ballard, the University District, and downtown, if they did not indicate those trips in Question 6a.

7. After reviewing the information presented on construction, which construction plan do you prefer? Comments?

39%--Intermediate construction plan: intermediate cost and overall duration, periods of intense and less intense traffic impacts.
 30%--Shorter construction plan: lower cost, shortest overall duration, intense traffic impacts
 11%--Longer construction plan: higher cost, longest overall duration, less intense but longer traffic impacts
 11%--No construction
 9%--No answer

Comments:

Prefers shorter plan: "I lived in West Seattle after a boat destroyed the drawbridge, and during high rise construction. We can live with shorter construction period because of lower costs."

Prefers intermediate plan: "Complete closure of SR 99 for the short duration plan seems very taxing on alternative routes for a very long time. Cost savings for longest plan not worth the additional length of time."

Prefers longer plan: "Closing the viaduct and Alaskan Way for any period will cause awful traffic that affects much of Seattle."

Prefers no construction plan:
 "None—fix existing viaduct"
 "No construction alternative—tear down/no replacement"

8. Considering your priorities, what ideas should be considered as ways to keep the

most people and goods moving during construction?

- Try to do as much as possible before construction, especially widening Spokane Street Viaduct and creating access ramp to 4th Avenue.
- Parking on one side only of First Avenue to have more lanes.
- Shuttle buses from West Seattle to Harbor Avenue to board a fleet of water ferries to downtown.
- Dedicated off-streets to handle peak traffic times, traffic signals adjusted to traffic count.
- More and better bus options.
- Keeping 3rd Avenue for transit after bus tunnel opens.
- Police supervision to keep traffic moving.
- Motivate carpooling—HOV lane on arterial-designated streets.
- Education to increase bus use/carpool/biking.

9. Was there information presented tonight about the tunnel or elevated structure alternatives that was useful? What was not here that you would like to know more about?

“Each station was very informative and the copies of each station’s placards was a great takeaway to review further.”

“Renovation of the existing structure—open house gave little or no information in this regard.”

“Some concrete information on the costs and more importantly, source of funds, for the tunnel.”

10. Was there information presented tonight about construction that was useful? What

was not here that you would like to know more about?

“No, there was little and not very useful info about construction and associated problems users of the viaduct will face—or the duration to contend with.”

“More on what the extent of disruption is expected.”

11. How did you hear about tonight’s open houses?

34%--Print news
30%--Newspaper ad
23%--Postcard
14%--Other
9%--Community Calendar
7%--Project email list
2%--Television news

Responses for ‘Other’ included friends and the neighborhood signage provided by Pigeon Point Community Council.

12. Any other comments?

“I would like to see the tunnel option prevail and waterfront parks develop as a result.”

“Costs should be spread to the whole state—Seattle taxpayers should not be expected to bear the costs of a tunnel dig!”

“We are seriously considering moving from the area in the near future because of tax and traffic issues—we are not alone! Retrofit the existing structure, please!”

“The ‘no-replacement’ option is utter folly. You can’t ignore 110,000 cars, inadequate surface street infrastructure and inadequate transit. If the politicians even consider it as an option, I would be hugely disappointed and angry.”



Project team members answer questions from the public.

**May 24, 2006—Ballard Community Center—
5:00-7:00 p.m.**

A total of 43 comment forms were received in Ballard. Quotes in this section were chosen as representative comments for the type of feedback received. Not every comment is listed here.

1. How often do you use the viaduct?

- 51%--Weekly
- 35%--Daily
- 12%--Monthly
- 2%--Between daily and weekly

2. When do you use the viaduct most often?

- 33%--Peak/commute hours
- 26%--More than one answer
- 19%--Off-peak hours during the day
- 14%--Weekends
- 4%--Off-peak hours at night
- 4%--No answer

Those who selected more than one answer most commonly selected a combination of peak and off-peak usage.

3. Do you use the viaduct to:

- 53%--Both bypass downtown and go to downtown
- 42%--Bypass downtown
- 5%--Go to downtown

4. When you use the viaduct, do you most frequently:

- 49%--Drive your car by yourself
- 30%--Drive your car with a passenger(s)
- 19%--More than one answer
- 2%--Be a passenger in a car

5. Do you (you may select multiple options):

- 81%--Live north of downtown
- 40%--Work south of downtown
- 14%--Work north of downtown
- 12%--Work downtown
- 9%--Other
- 2%--Live downtown
- 2%--Live south of downtown

Other responses provided included working on First Hill.

6a. For your most frequent trips on the viaduct, where are you coming from and going to? Select one in each category.

ORIGIN

- 42%--Ballard
- 21%--Magnolia
- 12%--Greenwood
- 9%--Queen Anne
- 7%--Fremont
- 5%--SeaTac
- 5%--Shoreline
- 2%--Downtown
- 2%--Interbay
- 2%--West Seattle
- 2%--Other

DESTINATION

26%--Other
 21%--Downtown
 21%--West Seattle
 19%--SODO
 16%--SeaTac
 14%--Duwamish
 5%--Ballard
 2%--Federal Way
 2%--Greenwood
 2%--Queen Anne
 2%--Shoreline

Of those respondents who specified what their "other destination" was, common answers were the airport, Renton, and I-5 South.

6b. Are there other frequent trips you make on the viaduct?

Ballard attendees most often indicated trips to neighborhoods north of Seattle, to the airport, and to the sports stadiums, if not reflected in Question 6a.

7. After reviewing the information presented on construction, which construction plan do you prefer? Comments?

40%--Shorter construction plan: lower cost, shortest overall duration, intense traffic impacts

33%--Intermediate construction plan: intermediate cost and overall duration, periods of intense and less intense traffic impacts.

23%--No answer

5%--Longer construction plan: higher cost, longest overall duration, less intense but longer traffic impacts

Comments:

Prefers intermediate plan: "If gasoline is priced more than \$5/gallon by 2008 then consider shorter plan with more intense

traffic impacts because there won't be as much traffic.

Prefers intermediate plan: "I like keeping SR 99 open for as long as possible, but overall construction time is also important."

No answer specified: "Don't care. Temporary pain is a given. Go for best long-term solution."

8. Considering your priorities, what ideas should be considered as ways to keep the most people and goods moving during construction?

- Add express bus service from Ballard to downtown more times per day.
- Offer incentives for people to use public transit; close streets during peak hours to transit only.
- Provide more park and ride lots at both ends of construction project.
- Bike trails to bypass downtown along the waterfront.
- Eliminate pedestrian conflict.
- Mandatory carpooling.

9. Was there information presented tonight about the tunnel or elevated structure alternatives that was useful? What was not here that you would like to know more about?

"I would have liked to see more on the two other alternatives: no-build and retrofit. I believe there should be a better analysis of those options and they should not be excluded this easily."

"Tunnel information seemed complete and informative. Elevated structure info was sparse or missing entirely. Appears a decision has been made."

"I would like to know more about funding alternatives for other options. I understand DOT cannot provide funding if vehicle capacity is reduced. This is unworkable—we should be figuring out ways to give people incentives not to drive."

10. Was there information presented tonight about construction that was useful? What was not here that you would like to know more about?

"More about mass transit and bike lanes."

"There was no real time estimates given for commute impacts."

"Fair/equal comparison of both alternatives for all three construction time scenarios not apparent."

11. How did you hear about tonight's open houses?

35%--Postcard
26%--Project email list
21%--Other
19%--Newspaper ad
16%--Print news
12%--Community Calendar
2%--Television news

Responses for 'Other' included friends, public radio, the U-District Street Fair, and a sign on the door of the Community Center.

12. Any other comments?

"Why aren't you asking if we, the taxpaying public, want a tunnel or elevated viaduct?"

"I would like to see the 'no-build' option presented in the broader light such as presented by Cary Moon to Council last month. Boulevard plus enhanced grid! Hoorah!"

"I am hoping the viaduct is replaced without the tunnel option, because I think the people of Seattle need the viaduct view, and I do not trust the mayor to not just turn the tunnel cover over to developers for more pricey condos."

"I believe the Elliott Bay Bridge is the best solution. Construction could be done while the viaduct remains in operation."

"I feel that undergrounding this roadway is vital to the long-term future and greatness of this city and area. Connecting the city with the sea is a tremendous opportunity that we must pursue."

"Considering costs, risks, impacts to waterfront business, project duration, the elevated option wins hands down."



Project Director Ron Paananen speaks with a member of the community.

Advertisement for the Open Houses

- Approximately 7,000 postcards were mailed to the project mailing list and to addresses in Ballard and West Seattle located near the meeting site.
- Posters were hung throughout the corridor in libraries, community centers, and businesses.
- Open house information was emailed to approximately 2,300 people in the April and May project list serve.
- An announcement was prominently posted on the project website.
- Display advertisements ran in twenty-one local and regional publications.
- Community organizations were informed about the open houses and were asked to include an announcement in their community calendars.
- A media advisory was issued to local media outlets.



Attendees at the open house in West Seattle.